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ABSTRACT

Data from four case studies of urban vocational education and a National Opinion Research Center survey of high school sophomores and seniors were used to research the role of vocational programs in managing the transition from school to work. The case study cities were Atlanta, Chicago, Rochester, and San Francisco. It was found that vocational education must provide students with skills and contacts to successfully manage the transition. Informal contacts were particularly important for negatively stereotyped groups, specifically young adults. Ways of managing the transition were varied among postsecondary, secondary, and Comprehensive Employment and Training Act programs in urban areas. Congressional efforts to regulate program direction as mandated in the Vocational Education Amendments have had little effect. Federal funds were being used largely to maintain existing programs and equipment. Procedural compliance with federal planning provisions was occurring. Program evaluation relied on traditional approaches with school officials in control. Local response to sex fairness provisions was quite limited. Local advisory councils have involved the private sector. It was recommended that through modification of federal vocational education policy Congress (1) emphasize contacts with the marketplace, (2) eliminate systems of institutional stratification, (3) encourage cooperation between programs and institutions, and (4) introduce greater variety. (YLB)

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URBAN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND MANAGING THE TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

by

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All students are engaged in vocational education. From the beginning of their school years they are learning abilities, skills and orientations that will benefit them in later life in their many and varied activities, including the work they perform in the jobs they hold. Of greatest voccational value to them will be their ability to read, write, calculate and communicate. Of far less value to most of them will be the specific information they acquire about a particular job or industry, for they may never be employed in such a position, or, if so employed, they may change occupations a short time later.

If the most important "vocational" training often takes place in what is thought to be a conventional academic classroom, what then is the purpose of what is specifically designed to be "vocational"? In this paper we shall suggest that the specific skills taught in vocational programs are valuable largely because they provide a mechanism for allowing students to develop direct contacts with a labor market. Managing the transition from school presents one of the greatest challenges to young Americans. At a time when youth attend school for an ever increasing number of years, or suffer high rates of unemployment if they do not, finding useful, interesting occupational careers is particularly difficult. The problems are most severe in those urban areas whose economies are in decline. It is, therefore, especially important for vocational education to assist in developing market contacts

for urban youth.

The studies upon which this paper depends found that vocational programs vary considerably in their capacity to provide relevant vocational training and valuable market contacts. In fact, a three-level system of vocational education programs seems to have developed in which: junior and community colleges and exceptional secondary level programs offer sophisticated, comprehensive training; neighborhood high schools, which are circumscribed by resource limitations, tend to rely on older, more primitive technologies; and manpower training programs financed under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) provide relatively low-sophistication training to individuals who have not successfully parlayed their prior educational experiences into employment. These three differing types of vocational programs are distinguishable in the kinds of students served, the quality of programs offered, the resources available, and the relationships established with both employers and trade unions.

The impact of federal policy on this differentiated system of service-delivery is two-fold. In the first place, federal funds, in conjunction with state and local resources, help sustain vocational programs in high schools and junior colleges. The exact consequences of federal dollars are difficult to measure because of the commingling of federal, state and local funds, and the ease with which federal funds can act as substitutes for local resources. While this poses a difficulty for the analyst attempting to discern a federal impact, the commingling of resources may be very beneficial for the programs themselves. Quite clearly, they ease local school systems' administrative burdens and permit allocation of resources into areas where local administrators believe they can be of greatest benefit. The impact of federal funds on CETA

programming is more substantial. Without federal dollars most of these programs could not survive. Whether or not the federal fiscal role in CETA should be sharply separated from its role in other vocational programs is another question, which is discussed at some length later in the paper.

If federal fiscal support has had definite local consequences, the second aspect of federal policy -- attempts to shape the use of federal funds through program regulations and guidelines -- has had much less of an impact. The Vocational Education Amendments of 1976 call for increased local planning, evaluation and participation by private sector groups. The legislation also calls upon local programs to reduce and eliminate sex bias and sex stereotyping. However, most of these requirements have had but the most minimal local impact. This can be attributed, in part, to their recent creation. If left intact over the course of a decade or more, more substantial consequences might become discernible. Yet, in one locality after another, administrators perceived many of the federal guidelines as largely irrelevant to their central mission. Planning and evaluation deadlines are met with a flurry of paperwork and a perfunctory yawn; sex stereotyping problems are gradually being addressed at the local level, but the impetus seems to have little to do with federal recommendations; and private sector participation in local vocational education programming remains substantial in the most prestigious programs and barely recognizable in the least prominent, just as it was prior to the passage of the 1976 Amendments.

Most importantly, federal policy seems largely oblivious of the fact that vocational programs vary considerably in their capacity to provide appropriate vocational training and valuable market contacts. Instead of building on strength or seeking to unify a divided system that competes with itself,

federal policy helps perpetuate a system that contains programs serving distinctive student constituencies with wide discrepancies in the quality of programs offered, the instructional and equipment resources available, and capacities to manage the transition from school to work. The greatest infusions of federal funds have been directed toward creation and maintenance of the lowest tier of existing vocational programs, those funded through CETA, which, to use a popular political metaphor, serve as a vocational "safety net." A significant repercussion of this noble effort, however, has been creation of a separate vocational training system that is largely divorced from its more prominent public school counterparts, and possesses little political incentive to narrow these gaps if it is to remain an independent entity.

On the basis of these findings we recommend in conclusion that the federal government could best meet urban vocational education needs by continuing to provide supplemental funding to local districts and encourage increased contacts between schools and the private sector and between the various levels of vocational programs. Instead of perpetuating mulitple levels through creation of a bottom tier with relatively little exposure to more prestigious vocational programs and minimal private sector support, federal policy should attempt to bridge existing gaps. Federal funds, at present, are scattered thinly across the myriad of existing secondary and postsecondary programs and funnelled into CETA; they do little to broaden access of minorities to more prestigious institutions, despite the fact that not all such schools are presently at peak enrollment levels. Instead of emphasizing an extensive series of requirements -- such as planning and evaluation -- which meet with largely perfunctory state and local responses, federal vocational policy might be redirected to build bridges between existing delivery systems, instead of imposing common obstacles upon each semi-autonomous level.

Our analysis and conclusions are based on data from two separate sources. First, we are drawing upon four case studies of urban vocational education in Atlanta, Chicago, Rochester, and San Francisco, which were commissioned by the Vocational Education Study Group in the National Institute of Education.[1] In each of these case studies information was collected by reading state and local reports on vocational education and by interviewing a wide variety of school officials, including teachers, principals, directors of vocational education, administrators of programs under the Comprehensive Education and Training Act, and other informed observers. While especially limited resources prevented the investigators from using systematic sampling techniques, to say nothing of gathering data on all vocational education programs in the four cities, a wide variety of vocational programs were observed. To supplement these case study findings, we also report information gathered by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) on the impact of vocational education programs as reported in a preliminary analysis of a 1980 survey of all high school sophomores and seniors in the United States.[2] This data set includes information on the background, abilities, educational programs, current work situation and future plans of the nation's high school sophomores and seniors. Nonetheless, the interpretations and conclusions given to these data are our own, and should not be attributed either to authors of the case studies or to NORC.

Managing the Transition from School to Work

The main purpose of vocational education is to manage the transition from school to work. The ways in which this transition is managed will differ, depending on the jobs for which students are being prepared and the types of skills that are required. For some students the period of transition will be

prolonged; for others, a relatively brief period of specific occupational preparation is all that is required. But for all of its variable components, the element which makes vocational education noticeably different from other forms of education is its specific interest in the processes of transition from the schoolhouse to the workplace.

Historically, vocational education was understood as involving training in certain kinds of subject matter and specific kinds of manual skills. The main divisions within vocational education were agriculture, domestic economics, industrial education, and business and commercial education. More recently, new areas of training such as the health and computer sciences have been incorporated as major components in vocational education. As functional specialization has increased, the number of specific occupations within these broad areas has multiplied, and as the technology has changed, the kinds of skills required and the specific areas where occupational opportunities exist have been dramatically altered. Clearly, there is no single body of knowledge which forms the curricular core for vocational education.

At the same time, it has become increasingly obvious to many educators that the most useful vocational skills include the very basic capacities to read quickly, comprehend easily, write clearly, and calculate accurately. Inasmuch as specific kinds of skill capacities quickly become dated, general verbal and numerical abilities, which can be translated into specific skill attributes with additional training, provide essential preparation for long-term career success. Thus, the two best predictors of earnings throughout one's working career are one's overall verbal ability and the years one has remained in school.

In a sense then, all of one's educational experiences comprise preparation for an occupation. Yet, if all education is in part occupationally related, it is important to distinguish clearly those specific educational experiences which can be usefully identified as primarily and distinctively vocational. In our view, there is a growing sense among policy analysts and policy makers that the distinctive contribution to be made by vocational education involves the successful management of the complex transition from school to work.

Skills and Contacts

In order for vocational education programs to manage successfully the transition from school to work, they must provide students with two separate but complementary attributes -- skills and contacts. Until very recently, vocational education has focused primarily on the provision of skills, leaving the development of market contacts either to the discretion and initiative of local administrators or to the individual job hunter. Recent economic analysis has, however, emphasized the independent importance of market contacts for finding suitable employment.[3]

We are now beginning to appreciate the complexity of the labor market, and recognize how awkward and cumbersome exchange relations in this market has become. As one economist observed recently, labor markets do not operate like grain markets, where the quality of the commodity is quite easily determined.[4] Instead, labor markets are more like marriage markets, where everything is uncertain and unpredictable. In the first place, when individuals search for jobs, and when firms search for employees, each side seeks a complex package of characteristics that best suits its interests. On the one side, individuals are interested not only in their prospective salary or wages, but, in addition, they are concerned about distance from home, work environment, hours of work,

camaraderie of associates, and availability of fringe benefits. On the other side, firms are interested in not only the potential employee's specific job related skills, but also in his or her dependability, collegiality, likelihood of remaining in the position, basic health, and overall mental abilities and learning capacities. Secondly, accurate information with respect to all the relevant characteristics of employees, on the one side, and jobs, on the other, is difficult to obtain in advance of employment. The most agreeable person in an interview situation may easily lose his or her temper under tension. Work that seems fascinating from afar may become tedious and boring upon greater familiarity. Thirdly, once a job has been accepted and a person hired, disengagement is difficult and costly. For the employer, union rules and legal requirements may impede discharge. For the employee, the costs of searching for a new position and the danger of developing a reputation for transience and undependability discourage frequent job switching. Just as prudent people enter the marriage market cautiously and make commitments only after gathering a good deal of information, firms and potential employees similarly must consider many factors before a "match" can be made.

Where exchanges are difficult and complex, both employers and employees use simplifying devices to gather the information they need. On the one side, individuals seek work with large, well-established, prestigious institutions whose reputation for permanence and continuity are well known. They may even forego more interesting, lucrative employment with smaller, newer firms, because the reliability of the employer is less well established. On the ohter side, employers, too, use simple cues that tell them easily and quickly who is likely to be an appropriate employee. Education has come to be one such cueing mechanism in the United States. Firms have discovered that those

who do well and persevere in their school work will generally perform ably on the job. Conceivably, one of the reasons why length of schooling is such a good predictor of future occupation and earnings is the importance of education as a cueing device for employers.

Race, sex and age cues also seem to be used by many employers. Social stereotypes have in the past stigmatized racial minorities, women and young adults. They can persist even in the face of significant changes in the characteristics of the stereotyped population, and are retained, in part, because the cueing characteristic is easily ascertained. Unfortunately, the ease with which the cueing characteristic is detected encourages its use even when the information being supplied may be erroneous in a large number of cases. Employers may know that a large number of women, blacks and young people may be quite satisfactory employees, but may still use this readily available cueing device to sort applicants for a position. Or, if selection of a person from a negatively stereotyped group is to be made, the employer will try to obtain additional information to insure that the individual in question does not conform to the group stereotyped.

In making such a search, employers may rely on another type of cue, the recommendation of friends. Where reliable information is important but difficult to ascertain, formal channels of information are often supplemented by confidential suggestions made through informal networks of friends and acquaintances. According to Granovetter, many individuals rely on informal connections in their search for employment; if jobs are found this way, then employers must be using informal contacts as an important informational source.[5]

The Changing Labor Market for Young Adults

Such informal connections may be particularly important for persons who are members of negatively stereotyped groups. In this regard, young adults may be becoming one of the most disadvantaged of the ascriptively defined social groups. While public attention and federal legislation have been successful in partially reducing discrimination against blacks and women, no comparable effort has been made to reduce discrimination against young adults. Instead, the negative social stereotyping of youth as potential employees has very likely increased.

In the first place, young adults are remaining in school for longer periods of time. While 14.2 percent of the population between the ages of 18 and 24 were enrolled in degree programs offered by institutions of higher education in 1950, that percentage steadily increased over the next three decades until by 1977, 34.3 percent of the age cohort were so engaged (see Table 1). The interest in further education is even greater in urban areas than in suburban or rural parts of the country. School administrators were asked by NORC to estimate the percentage of the 1978-79 high school graduates who went on to "regular college" the year after they graduated from high school. Seventy-one percent of urban administrators estimated that more than one-third were in "regular college," while the one-third figure was given by only 55 and 41 percent of the administrators in suburban and rural areas, respectively.[6] These data refer only to those students in degree-granting programs; when all postsecondary institutions are included, over half of the nation's high school graduates are in some kind of postsecondary training program. To be sure, many youth in school are still participating in the labor market. Yet, the larger percentages of young people in school tends to reinforce the social impression that persons in that age cohort are not

yet "ready" for serious, regular employment.

Secondly, even while a large and ever increasing percentage of the young adult population are in school (and therefore removed from the labor market), youth unemployment has nonetheless increased. While the level of unemployment among those between the ages of 16 and 19 has fluctuated with overall economic conditions, levels of youth unemployment were generally higher in the sixties and seventies than in the forties and fifties (see Table 2). Moreover, there has been a secular increase in the differentials between youth and adult employment over this time period. Before 1960, differentials between youth and adult unemployment fluctuated between six and nine percent. In the 1970s the differentials have never been less than 10 percent. Were it not for the manpower training programs specifically aimed at young adults, these differentials would probably be even greater. Between 1957 and 1963 unemployment differentials between youth and overall unemployment increased dramatically from 8.8 to 15.1 percent. As a variety of youth employment programs were instituted in the following years, these differentials dropped to a level hovering between 10 and 11 percent.

These adverse trends are aggravated by the economic difficulties experienced by many urban areas. Technological innovations in transportation and communication have reduced the need both for face-to-face contact and for the concentration of manufacturing facilities near central distribution points. As a result, many firms have moved from large central cities to suburbs, smaller cities and rural areas, where labor is less expensive and public amenities -- open space, reduced pollution, less crime, etc. -- are more amply provided. Except for a few cities in the south and western parts of the United States, central cities are exporting capital, labor, and people. As central city economies decline, employment opportunities for young people

are especially scarce. In Chicago, for example, overall unemployment levels in 1978 were 9.1 percent, as compared to 6.0 percent nationwide. Unemployment among youth between the ages of 16 and 19 was 26.0 percent, and estimates of unemployment among minority youth ranged from 35 to 50 percent.

With large numbers of young adults in school and another large percentage unemployed, employer perceptions of the age cohort, taken as a whole, are likely to be stereotyped. They are likely to be perceived as unsteady, irregular workers without a sufficient sense of responsibility to the work situation. Given their probable need for at least some on-the-job training, the uncertainty of their long-term commitment to the firm makes investment in their recruitment all the more dubious. In sum, as unemployment rates among young adults persist at high levels, they suffer discrimination at the hands of potential employers, who are tempted to treat their age as a negative cue. The problem is especially severe in urban areas, and among minorities, whose unemployment rates are particularly high.

Vocational Education and the Establishment of Market Contacts

The adverse stereotypical image of the young adult and limitation on employment opportunities complicate the transition from school to work. Successful vocational education programs cannot simply provide students with the necessary skills that lead to employment opportunities; in addition, they must provide students with market contacts as well. If a vocational education program is treated as a trustworthy source of reliable employees, firms will treat the recommendations of the program staff with respect, and graduates of the program will have a valuable credential that will assist them in securing their position. Even better, if the students find work related to their schooling while still in the vocational education program, the transition from

school to work can be made smoothly without a period of disruptive unemployment. Such connections between vocational programs and the marketplace are the most easily achieved if the program itself is of high quality. At the same time, such market contacts help to maintain a high quality. This dynamic is evidenced repeatedly in the most prominent vocational programs in the cities included in the case study project. Without the ability to place its graduates, vocational programs find it more difficult to attract good students, and teachers begin to lose enthusiasm for their work. The quality of the educational level of the program begins to slip. Quality vocational programs and market contacts are like the proverbial chicken and egg. They go together; which comes first is difficult to ascertain.

Data from the recently completed NORC study provide interesting evidence that suggests that vocational education programs, on a nationwide basis, have helped to ease the transition from school to work for many young adults. The survey reveals, in the first place, that teenagers are interested in employment opportunities and pursue them well in advance of graduation. According to students' own reports, more than one half of the sophomores and seniors are employed in some capacity for at least one hour in the week preceding the interview. The percentage of students employed increases to well above 60 percent for those 17-18 years of age. Of those working. the mean number of hours worked per week was 12.6 for sophomores and 19.4 for seniors. The mean hourly wage was $2.63 for sophomores and $3.28 for seniors. Among sophomores, 40 percent of the employment was in odd jobs, babysitting, or farm work, and another 23 percent were unwilling to classify their position in any of the categories available. But for seniors the percentages employed in these less structured occupations declined to 10 percent, although another 20 percent did not specify the exact nature of their work. A full 70 percent

of the seniors employed were engaged in trade, commerce or industry in apparently well-defined positions of employment. Significantly, the probability that high school students will be employed has remained relatively stable since 1972. Just as overall unemployment levels among 16 to 19 year-olds did not change dramatically over the decade (see Table 2), so the percentage of high school students who were employed remained relatively constant. Indeed, among white females the proportion working actually increased by about five percent over the eight year period.

The hours and wages for minority youth in urban areas were not significantly different from those of white suburban youth. For example, the weekly earnings of urban black males averaged $46.53, Hispanics averaged $55.92, while white suburban males averaged $44.50. Also, urban minority youth who were employed were as likely to be employed in structured occupations as white youth.

High school work activities seem important for employment upon graduation. A substantial majority of the seniors presently working in more structured occupations who are not planning to go to school either plan to continue in the same job or have a new job already lined up. However, those who are only employed in odd jobs or babysitting are much less likely to have postgraduate job plans established by the spring of their senior year.

Although further analysis of this issue is needed, preliminary findings are suggestive. There is little evidence that increased involvement in work activities has an adverse effect on student performance in school. For example, the number of hours spent on homework (which is strongly related to performance on verbal achievement tests) declined only slightly as the number of hours at work increased. White male seniors who were not working spent 4.3 hours a week on homework, while those working 35 hours a week or more

spent 3.0 hours on homework, on the average. The variation was less for all other subgroups, often considerably so. In fact, the more black male sophomores worked at a job, the more hours they spent on their homework. Moreover, the grade point averages of those employed were virtually the same as those who were not working.

Given the large number of high school students who are employed, the number of hours a week that they work, the substantial average compensation which they receive, and the significance of this work for future employment, it is of interest to examine the effect of vocational education programs on student employment. When students who report being engaged in vocational programs are compared to those in academic or general education programs, in almost all comparisons students in vocational education are more likely to be employed. The greatest differences are between those in vocational and college preparatory tracks. For example, among senior males, the percentage employed among those in vocational programs is 73 percent, while it is only 61 percent for the college preps (see Table 3). Even more significantly, students in vocational education programs are also more likely to be employed than students in general education programs. Elsewhere in the survey, it is shown that the characteristics of vocational and general education students are generally similar; for example, while college preparatory students scored significantly higher on tests of verbal ability, there were almost no differences between vocational and general education students. Yet, the "vocies" are more likely to be employed. Among seniors, for example, 68 percent of the vocational education students are employed, as compared to only 62 percent of the general education students. Moreover, differences between vocational and general education sophomores and seniors persist even after controlling for the student's age, sex, family income, and the region of the country in

which he or she lives. Finally, the percentage of students who sought jobs but who were unable to find them was lower for vocational education than for general education students.

These differences do not necessarily carry over into other aspects of the employment situation, however. For example, vocational education students earn less than the college prep students who are employed, and they earn no more than those in general education programs. Nonetheless, these findings do suggest recognizable distinctions between vocational and general education programs and students.

Varieties of Vocational Education Programs

These findings from survey research identify the role that vocational programs can and do play in managing the transition from school to work. However, they do not distinguish among the great variety of vocational education programs that are to be found in urban areas, and the varying ways in which differing programs manage the transition. The four-city case studies discovered that some vocational education programs are exemplary in quality, enjoy abundant resources, admit a limited number of students from a large number of applicants, receive materials and supplies from the private sector, and boast enviable placement records. Less well-endowed programs admit students without other educational options, have limited facilities and equipment, maintain routine course offerings, and have few contacts with the private sector.

Variability in program offerings has produced three distinct types of vocational education programs, with each type serving a distinctive clientele. The premier type of vocational education includes many postsecondary institutions, including the community colleges and the junior colleges; less

well-endowed are the vocational programs in many of our secondary schools; the greatest difficulties are in the many and varied manpower training programs funded under CETA.

Postsecondary Vocational Programs

The postsecondary vocational programs have expanded rapidly over the past two decades. Increasing numbers of high school graduates are extending their education, while employment prospects for high school graduates have remained limited throughout the 1970s, and, as a result, these postsecondary institutions are playing an increasingly important role. In general, they seem to have responded well to the challenges and opportunities offered them. The programs are notable for their attractiveness to students, the amplitude of resources available to them, the ease with which they can modify course offerings in response to changing market demands, and the many connections they have established with commerce and industry. They have also circumvented the problems associated with enrollment decline, which have limited vocational education programs at the secondary level.

The San Francisco case study examined the postsecondary institutions with special care, and the findings from this research demonstrate the considerable potential for vocational education at this level. Postsecondary education in "the City" is carried out by the City College of San Francisco and by Community College Centers. The City College offers an accredited two-year transfer program, while the Centers, scattered about the city in eight locations, and numerous satellite facilities, offer courses without credit in a continuing education program for adults.[7] Nearly half of the City College students are enrolled in vocational programs, and each of the Centers has a primarily vocational emphasis. This two-pronged effort in vocational education allows for considerable diversity. As one administrator observed,"The different

delivery systems provide much flexibility and freedom, both for our programs and our students."[8]

Both the College and Centers convey a sense of confidence and optimism, especially when compared with vocational education in San Francisco's secondary schools. Administrators emphasize that their programs have superior facilities and instructional resources than do the high schools. "The high schools are compulsory," said one college administrator, "and that produces some problems; anyone in our program is there because they want to learn something."[9] "The community colleges are driving hard," observed one of his colleagues, "and the high schools have given in quite a number of times."[10] While the high schools are finding "it difficult to maintain old programs, much less get new ones off the ground," the College and Centers find it easy to hire new faculty and adapt and modify curricular offerings in response to changing market demands.[11] The flexibility in faculty recruitment that the College and Centers enjoy is especially important in this regard. While a permanent faculty is maintained, this is supplemented with a substantial number of part-time teachers. This allows the programs the opportunity to review the quality of their instructional resources and to provide changing offerings, as student interests alter. The desirability of teaching at the college level provides a substantial pool of talent which the College and Centers draw upon.

Private sector relationships are generally quite good. Every college vocational program has an advisory council, which is comprised of experts within each occupation and advises on curricular and personnel questions. The extent of council participation varies, of course. The hotel and restaurant management program, at one extreme, works in tandem with affiliated unions and other experts in the industry. Other programs have less contact with

the private sector.

Two of the centers have particularly impressive programs. The John A. O'Connell Community College Center provides training in trade and industrial skills for 8,000 students each year, including 1,200 in apprentice programs that are closely coordinated with labor and industry. The Downtown Community College Center, which has opened a new facility within the past two years, focuses on such subjects as accounting, banking, communications, computer studies, real estate and secretarial work. Its programs are diverse, its offerings popular among students, and its linkages with San Francisco's growing downtown business community close and mutually satisfactory.[12]

Vocational Education in Specialized Secondary Institutions

Some secondary vocational programs in urban areas approach the high performance levels that is characteristic of programs in most postsecondary schools. Yet, these secondary level successes are exceptional in several respects. First, they occur in typically specialized vocational high schools that recruit students citywide and develop reputations for excellence in certain vocational areas, whether it be industrial trades or business skills. Second, they are given a degree of autonomy from general secondary school policies, allowing them to recruit staff and build private sector relations not typically found in comprehensive high schools. The private sector, in turn, finds them highly attractive sources of potential labor. Third, many of their students are college-bound. Although they operate as vocational schools, they in fact are not directly responsible for the transition from school to work of many of their students. In fact, they rival college preparatory secondary schools in their reputation for overall academic excellence.

The Edison Technical and Occupational Education Center, which opened in 1979 on a thirty-acre site as part of an industrial park in northwest Rochester,

is the prestige vocational education program of that city. Serving 13 percent of the secondary school population, it offers instruction in such areas as automobile and aeronautical power, business and marketing, construction, graphic arts and printing, human services, health, mechanical and electrical engineering, and the sciences. The racial composition of the school is roughly equivalent to that of the Rochester school system taken as a whole. The success of the programs at Edison is indicated by the ease with which graduates obtain positions; about 95 percent of those entering the job market are able to find employment upon completion of the school's program, although a large number of them get jobs outside the field in which they were trained.[13] Ironically, Edison's full and part-day enrollments have remained well below capacity, despite its preeminence among city secondary vocational programs.

Four high-quality, prestige secondary schools were visited in Chicago. These included a trade school with an apprentice program, a business and commerce school located in downtown Chicago, and two high-quality, predominantly black vocational schools in Chicago's South Side. In these four schools one found as attractive a set of program offerings as one is likely to find anywhere in public school education; one quickly forgets the school system's recent political and economic traumas upon visitation to such schools. The schools have excellent facilities and equipment, first-rate administrative leadership, a stable faculty, good relations with relevant industries and trade unions, and attentive, energetic student bodies. While the trade school remains predominantly white, the three other schools were overwhelmingly black in 1979: 99.8, 99.8 and 78.8 percent, respectively. The minority with the most limited access to the best of Chicago's vocational education was the Hispanic community. Only in the commercially-oriented school were they found in percentages roughly equivalent to their presence in the citywide school system.[14]

The flagship of the San Francisco secondary vocational enterprise is hardly auspicious on first inspection, as it is located in a former elementary school, but the School of Business and Commerce offers comparatively sophisticated instruction to the 275 to 350 students who enroll each semester. Like Edison, the school does not approach maximum enrollment; the present facility could accept approximately 30 percent more students, and it may eventually house evening school classes. Enrollment expansion is possible in part because of the part-time nature of participation in the school's programs. Students divide their time between the school and their neighborhood high school, and bus service is provided for students in both morning and afternoon sessions. As in Rochester, the local school district has been unable to fill vocational classrooms in its premier vocational institutions due to a series of administrative complications.[15]

Enrollment is limited to juniors and seniors, and approximately 60 percent of the students participate in placement and internship programs located throughout San Francisco. Many are also often involved in leadership roles within their neighborhood high school. As one administrator explained, "Our students are quite prominent wherever they go." The school's largest feeder high school, in fact, is Lowell High School, the most celebrated academically-oriented public high school in San Francisco.[16]

Close connections with leading institutions in the private sector serve to supplement instructional effectiveness, both through extensive internship and placement positions with institutions and cooperative instructional ventures provided within the school. Private sector support has undergirded many aspects of the school's curricular development, and approximately 100 local companies support the school either with cooperative training programs or financial support. Diverse local groups, ranging from the Chamber of

Commerce to the Teamsters Union played a role in the initial development of the school and remain enthusiastic supporters. "Business seems to like what we're doing and has been very helpful," said one administrator. "One of the advantages of focusing many of our more sophisticated vocational courses into one school has been the enhanced ability to obtain private sector support."[17]

Specialized vocational high schools have not historically been a part of the Atlanta experience. The city has always emphasized academic, college preparatory programs, and even after major shifts in racial composition and racial direction of the schools, this orientation toward academic programs continues. However, the Atlanta Area Technical School, operated by the Atlanta Public Schools in conjunction with Fulton County, provides a partial exception to the dominant tendency in the city. Although the school was at one time known for the quality of its offerings, which included many post-secondary programs, in recent years competition from junior colleges has intensified, and the reputation of the school has declined. About half of the students in the school take remedial courses in reading, and some observers characterize the school's curriculum as "watered down."[18]

Yet, Atlanta is like the other cities in that the highest quality vocational schooling is offered in the more specialized high schools. Although not all specialized high schools are of high quality, the case studies indicate a general tendency for offerings to be of higher quality in the more specialized school. The reasons for this pattern appears to be multiple. Many students prefer specialized schools as a way of avoiding some of the disciplinary problems of the comprehensive high school. Administrators of specialized schools seem to have greater flexibility in recruitment of staff and deployment of resources. Federal funds for vocational equipment may be directed more toward specialized schools, where the impact is more readily identified.

Finally, the school is able to build relations with the private sector more easily. As a San Francisco administrator observed, " We wanted one quality school that could offer finished training, and /we/ considered /the development of a specialized school/ the best way to achieve that goal." [19]

Vocational Programs in Comprehensive High Schools

By comparison with offerings in specialized high schools and at the postsecondary level, vocational education within comprehensive high schools was of generally inferior quality. Instruction is limited in many high schools by inadequate facilities, outdated equipment, and the wide range of curricular responsibilities that must be met. Purchase of materials and supplies is often difficult for comprehensive schools, both because of the expense of individual pieces of sophisticated equipment and the dilemma of equitably distributing it among the schools in the city. The prestigious schools, by contrast, secure such equipment and material through private donation. Moreover, administrators of less well-endowed vocational schools have limited staffing flexibility, and are generally unable to develop the sparkling reputations of their more prestigious counterparts. In Atlanta, where vocational programs are broadly scattered and not concentrated in more prestigious institutions, support for vocational education is understandably unenthusiastic. "Vocational programs get a fair share of Atlanta's education budget, but they do not get full support in terms of recognition and leadership, areas which are crucial if vocational training is to be seen by students and taxpayers as a complete, viable alternative to academics."[20]

Advanced skill training is seldom provided in the majority of comprehensive high schools. Instead, general work-related skills are stressed, and include introduction to the basic language of specific vocational areas and to the expectations of employers in various industries. This is supplemented

by some project-oriented training, although much of this training is not directly applicable for a student seeking immediate employment upon graduation.

Clerical and general business courses may be somewhat more thorough in their introductory courses, perhaps because of reliance on more static technologies. At least they can provide graduates with typing and machine transcription skills that might qualify them for certain kinds of employment. "The wisest investment we could make, if the money was available, would be to update all our typewriter labs so that they were entirely electric," an administrator in Chicago explained.[21] This might be followed by acquisition of new equipment for accounting and data processing courses. More sophisticated equipment and programs, by contrast, are reserved as the domain of postsecondary and specialized secondary institutions.

Vocational training in comprehensive high schools is handicapped by a number of diverse factors. First, except in unusual circumstances the administrative leadership of the school is likely to be more concerned about maintaining the quality of the academic programs; vocational education emerges as an afterthought by comparison. Secondly, equipment and supplies for comprehensive schools are likely to be distributed among all schools within the large central city according to a standard formula. Obtaining the special instructional and curricular resources necessary to mount exciting, innovative programs runs contrary to central office policies -- and federal guidelines -- which require that neighborhood schools be treated equally. Thirdly, in some cities personnel recruitment for comprehensive schools was highly centralized, leaving school-level administrators without the flexibility that the more specialized schools enjoyed. Fourth, relationships with the private sector were harder to develop and sustain. Fifth, many of the more studious and serious-minded students left the neighborhood school for a more specialized

institution, less dominated by neighborhood youth culture.

The problems faced by the comprehensive high school were noticed with such regularity in all four cities that one cannot begin but wonder whether this institution has begun to outlive its original purpose. Especially with regard to vocational education, instruction must now be so specialized and the necessary equipment must be so sophisticated that it is difficult to create complete vocational programs in all of the high schools of a city. At the same time the comprehensive high school, by attempting to respond to all tastes, orientations, and abilities, has no focus and purpose of its own. Instead, the school acquires its meaning from the culture of the neighborhood in which it is embedded. In many central city neighborhoods, teachers and students alike are searching for alternatives.

Perhaps federal policy needs to further encourage the search for alternatives. Vocational dollars used to support rudimentary secondary comprehensive school vocational programs may only sustain an institutional framework that is increasingly out of date, especially in contrast with other local programs that boast more relevant curriculum and more substantial contacts. Federal dollars are scattered widely amongst the various institutions and do little to reconcile existing service discrepancies; in fact, the good programs only become better with supplemental federal funds, able to make innovative investments, while their less prominent counterparts merely try to maintain present services. Ironically, some of the leading vocational institutions -- those that get ahead and stay there -- operate with less than full enrollments. Rochester's Edison and San Francisco's School of Business and Commerce and some of its community college centers are reflective of "underenrolled" programs which could assist more students without facility expansion.

Indeed, federal assistance to management of the transition from school to

work could include placing more students in the best possible programs available instead of merely leaving them in static vocational programs while unrolling the CETA "safety net" below. Federal funds could be directed toward providing maximum educational opportunity at the best possible local institutions, and provide a bridge for students into programs more likely to manage effectively the transition from school to work. An example of the potential bridging of the polar extremes of vocational progams are provided by the Chicago case study. The city's premier trade school, long known for its extraordinarily successful ability to provide its students with excellent contacts, has long been intransigent to federal participation of any kind in its affairs. Federal interferences were seen by school administrators as outweighing revenue benefits. However, many of the program's students are potentially eligible for support funding from CETA because of their socioeconomic status. Combined with the recent trauma of the Chicago school system, trade school officials and CETA representatives are beginning to seriously consider working in tandem. Bridges were also being constructed between introductory skill programs and the trade center, and the latter may absorb entire programs. Similarly, in San Francisco, community colleges have gradually assumed responsibility for many programs that have become too expensive to be maintained by secondary schools. Secondary and community college vocational education instruction are frequently offered in identical sites; program coordination is rare, as the static secondary instruction is unable to tap the relatively rich resources of their neighboring community college. Federal policy could be designed to encourage such cooperation and make the most of existing local resources, instead of perpetuating the clear lines of demarcation among existing programs and waiting for local crises to encourage cooperation. Such a strategy would seem particularly promising given declining enrollments

in each of the four cities studied, thereby emphasizing the healthy coordination -- potentially consolidation -- of programs in an effort to make maximum use of local strengths. Instead of proliferating dated programs at the secondary level and a segregated CETA system at the bottom, limited federal funds could underwrite placements of students in respected, proven institutions whose enrollments and services could be expanded.

Comprehensive Employment and Training Act

The lack of coordination between the Vocational Education Act and CETA funds is illustrative of the federal contribution to creation and perpetuation of distinct levels of vocational education service delivery. Recent Amendments to both pieces of legislation have demonstrated awareness of the need to coordinate the two. Nonetheless, when the programs are viewed at the local level, such cooperation is largely non-existent. VEA and CETA programs serve overlapping constituencies, but neither find much occasion to collaborate or seek ways in which mutual resources might best be focused to provide services. Instead, they coexist autonomously, often entirely unaware of vocational services offered by the other, even when located nearby and offering programs of conceivable benefit to one another. Although they seek similar ends -- managing the transition from school to work for their participants -- they pursue this matter independently of each other.

In one of the city studies, for example, most lower-ranking vocational school officials knew little and cared less about CETA programs. Many contended that the law does not allow them to inform any enrolled student about the availability of the CETA training programs, regardless of potential applicability of training. They generally complained about the quality of any CETA workers assigned to work in the public schools -- unless the school administrator was able to select one of his or her own students for a CETA-paid position. They

regarded CETA dollars as wasted money, paying exorbitant funds for programs that included stipends to trainees. We found no school-building level administrators who showed any awareness of vocational programs being provided by CETA outside the public schools. For the Brahmins in the school system, CETA programs seemed simply "untouchable." Given these attitudes toward CETA, it has been difficult to translate formal cooperation into substantive programs. School administrators, of course, are not the sole sources of intransigence. CETA administrators were equally uncharitable with regard to the public schools. They claimed that they were educating those that the schools had "failed."

Data from the NORC survey reinforce these impressions of the separation of CETA and school-related programs. For one thing, self-reported participation of high school students in CETA programs increased from only 6.5 in 1972 to 8.5 percent in 1980. That the percentage involvement in CETA programs should have increased only slightly, even though CETA expenditures increased threefold over the eight year period,[22] indicates the extent to which CETA programs are aimed at those who have already left the public schools. CETA claims to serve those the high schools have failed; quite clearly CETA and the vocational components of the public schools together have failed to use their resources jointly to provide the best possible vocational experiences.

Comparisons between student participation in cooperative education and in CETA further document program separation. On the one hand, vocational education students were far more likely than general education students to participate in cooperative education programs, which provide work opportunities for students through the public schools. As can be seen in Table 4, 21.4 percent of the "vocies" were working in the cooperative program, but only 9.6 percent of the "general" students were, a difference of 11.8 percent.

Participation in CETA, on the other hand, was only 1.8 percent greater among "vocies" than among the general education students. In other words, where the public schools were responsible for administering a work project, such work opportunities were closely coordinated with the vocational training program in the high schools. Where work was sponsored through the separately managed CETA programs, working relationships were no closer with vocational education than they were with the general education programs of the high school.

In a quite separate study which came to our attention only after we had drafted this report of our own findings, Elmore reached such similar conclusions that they are worth quoting in some detail:

> Federal incentives /for cooperation between CETA and public schools/ are working against a long tradition of competition and animosity between manpower service deliverers and school systems. Manpower people see themselves as coping with the school system's failures: dropouts, in-school youth who are ill-prepared to enter the work force, and disadvantaged youth who have had difficulty getting access to vocational education programs. School people, on the other hand, criticize youth employment programs for their narrow focus on job-entry at the expense of broader educational objectives; for their willingness to reward youth who have failed to meet the school system's standards of performance; and for their focus on disadvantaged youth at the expense of the general youth population. One sign of this distrust is duplicated programming. CETA prime sponsors often run basic skills and high school equivalency programs on the assumption that youth who have been pushed out of school cannot be expected to go back. School systems run career awareness and work experience programs on the assumption that these programs work better when they are orchestrated with academic work. Another sign of distrust is pro forma coordination. Each party agrees to perform some specialized task in isolation from the other. School personnel will offer a special high school equivalency course off campus. CETA program operators will agree to accept a certain quota of in-school youth. The net effect of coordination in the presence of distrust is a basically unintelligible, disjointed, and inaccessible delivery system.[23]

CETA programs themselves vary considerably in quality, and there are, no doubt, some programs in nearly every city that are of exceptional value. Foremost among these exemplary programs is a tool and die training program developed in Rochester that is largely run by private industry and boasts an

exceptional training and placement record.[24] Such impressive program performance, however, remains unusual in the cities surveyed. The Rochester report acknowledged, "Apart from the tool and di.: program, the other Rochester CETA programs appeared much less selective and far less likely to lead to permanent unsubsidized employment."[25] This was reflective of findings in the other cities. CETA programs labor under an especially severe constraint: they are officially designated as a service delivery system specifically reserved for the low-income population.

The NORC survey data emphasize the extent to which CETA programs are in fact aimed at the low-income, minority population. Employed black students were five times as likely as whites to have a CETA or other government sponsored job: 22.7 percent of the black sophomores and 27.8 percent of the seniors reported their job in these terms, while only four percent of the white sophomores and 5.3 percent of the white seniors so described their position. Hispanic students fall roughly in between blacks and whites. Moreover, a much larger proportion of students from low-income families have jobs sponsored by the government than do higher income students. The extent to which CETA serves a distinctive social clientele is also evident when one compares student participation in the cooperative education programs operated through the public schools with participation in CETA programs. While the cooperative education programs have similar percentages of all racial groups participating within them (13 percent of black seniors, 11 percent of Hispanics, and 10 percent of whites), CETA programs are marked by strong minority predominance (26 percent of black seniors, 15 percent of Hispanics, but only 5 percent of whites). Similarly, income differentials discriminated but little among participants in the cooperative education program, while CETA programs were aimed largely at low income groups. Viewed positively, these data indicate the

critical role that the government has played in recent years in providing employment opportunities for minority youth. Without the strong federal presence in youth employment, it is likely that the race and income differentials in youth employment would be much greater than they presently are. Viewed negatively, these data also suggest the extent to which CETA programs are serving a racially and class segregated clientele, leading to stereotyped assessments of the quality of their programs and the marketability of their graduates.

CETA commitment to serve those that other programs have "failed" is certainly laudable. Nonetheless, CETA programs illustrate the kind of training that emerges when services are concentrated on that segment of the population where unemployment is the greatest. They have difficulty in establishing working relationships with other, more solidly established government agencies. The number of student contact hours for teachers is high, teacher salaries are relatively low, relationships with industry are difficult to sustain, and successful placement of graduates in stable positions of employment is difficult. Students are rarely placed with more prominent institutions that might better bridge the gap leading to employment, although CETA stipends could prove an attractive enticement to top flight public school vocational programs.

CETA programs have had as much -- and possibly more -- difficulty in establishing sound relationships with private business firms as have the less prestigious vocational programs in the public schools. Many firms seem to doubt that CETA trainees have learned the requisite work skills, and, as a result, most CETA on-the-job training placements have been within the public sector. Congress recently has tried to rectify this arrangement by creating private industrial councils to advise local programs and by giving tax

credits to firms who hire individuals enrolled in CETA or comparable training programs. Several CETA administrators were encouraged by this development: "Private institutions," one said, "simply don't want to mess with the government; they say that once you let them in you never get them out, and they're right. They don't want paper work, and they don't want government inspectors snooping around their shop floor. But they will respond when an incentive is offered, and I think this might work very effectively. It means that businesses can save some bucks and our people can do more than move leaves around for a few months."[26] Although the observation was expressed in optimistic terms, it pointed to difficulties with CETA programs at present. Businesses and industries demonstrated repeated willingness to embrace prestigious vocational education programs, but tend to shun less-established programs serving a low-income clientele, such as those of many comprehensive high schools and many CETA programs. This is evidenced by the fact that many CETA placements are in low-level positions of transitory help to public service agencies, which offer little "training" other than to encourage regular attendance. Tax incentives may change the pattern, but this still remains in the hopeful stage.

At the risk of being repetitious we quote at length once again from Elmore's study of CETA programs:

> The weakest link in the CETA system as a whole, and in the youth employment delivery system especially, is the connection between youth employment services and private sector employment. Private employers seem generally to have adopted an arms-length posture toward youth employment programs--occasional token involvement in advisory groups, modest cooperation in work experience programs, and a generally critical view of the ability of schools to prepare young people with the skills needed for entry-level employment. <u>The few outstanding cases of private sector linkages seem to have come about as a result of school system actions rather than CETA-initiated activities</u>. . . . /<u>emphasis is ours</u>/

> Employers seem generally to regard young people as ill-prepared for labor force entry, both because they lack the basic skills necessary for job performance and because their attitudes and values make their assimilation into the work force more difficult. Some of this perception is based on fact, some on stereotyping. . . . Whatever the explanation, some part of the problem of private sector linkages lies with the marketability of young people. It seems unlikely that this situation will change unless some way can be found for private sector employers to claim ownership of and identify with the products of the education and employment training system. . . .
>
> It remains to be seen whether the new Private Industry Councils . . . will spur a new role for employers in youth programs.[27]

Impact of Vocational Education Amendments

Fiscal Impact

The impact of VEA funds on urban education is both fiscal and regulative. Fiscal impacts, though probably significant, are difficult to discern accurately. VEA funds pay for less than 10 percent of all vocational education. These funds are commingled with state and local vocational dollars, and it becomes difficult to specify what exactly federal monies are used for. In many places equipment, materials, and supplies are paid for out of federal funds, presumably because local authorities can easily account for such expenditures and because such purchases can be varied as the flow of federal dollars goes up or down. But many of these purchases would have to be made from state and local resources if federal dollars were not forthcoming, which would constrict other aspects of the vocational program.

It can be said that in many parts of the country urban school systems have serious financial needs, and federal dollars alleviate the fiscal strain somewhat. Federal financial support is urgently needed by school systems in large cities suffering decreasing local tax resources and declining state aid. In all four cities investigated, the federal vocational

dollar was used by secondary schools largely to maintain existing programs and equipment. Only in the case of the San Francisco community colleges were federal resources perceived to be an "extra" that supplied less than critically needed resources. In that single case, an administrator observed that "most of the aid goes into non-essentials, things we would like to have but could conceivably do without. . . . If federal funds were suddenly withdrawn, there would probably be no need for us to remove or severely alter any present programs we consider really important."[28] By contrast, at the secondary level federal vocational dollars were distributed broadly to programs throughout the city and channelled generally toward basic system maintenance. Of course, this does not allow for many flashy programs that readily impress outside observers. Yet, the impact of a cut in federal funding at a time when urban areas are increasingly pressed for funds from state and local sources could be severe.

Urban districts are also affected by the wide discretion VEA gives to state fiscal policy makers. Instead of allocating federal funds to specific school districts, as is the practice with Title I and Impact Aid policies, VEA gives within state distributional responsibilities to the State Department of Education. Because another study funded by the National Institute of Education is examining this question in detail,[29] the case studies did not cover this topic systematically. But even passing attention to the problem indicated that urban areas tend to be less well funded than are other parts of the state. Chicago, for example, has approximately 21 percent of the State of Illinois' public secondary school population, but it received only 14 percent of the federal vocational dollars in 1979.[30] By allowing states to have considerable discretion in the allocation of vocational funds, Congress is indirectly limiting resources available to urban schools.

In sum, the fiscal impact of federal policy on urban areas could very well be substantial. The amount of money allocated for vocational education, and its distribution among school districts, provides urban school systems with valuable resources that seem to be essential for maintaining basic services but which are, nonetheless, insufficient for mounting innovative, exciting training programs. The precise effects of marginal changes -- upward or downward -- in the size of the vocational dollar are difficult to specify, yet it would be idle to suggest that such changes would not be noticed by hard-pressed urban school systems.

Regulative Impact

While the exact fiscal effects of federal policy are hard to specify, the impact of federal regulations which are coupled with the grants-in-aid can be assessed more directly. In this case one can examine Congressional legislation and federal regulations, then compare these requirements to local practice. If practice seems highly responsive to federal rules, then the regulative impact can be regarded as substantial. Unfortunately, the case studies found little evidence that local practice was significantly influenced by federal policy. Congress' increased effort to direct vocational education programming is perhaps best illustrated by the dramatic increase in the actual length of the legislation authorizing the program. In 1963 the Vocational Education Act was but thirteen pages in length, but in 1968 it expanded to thirty-three pages, and by 1976 was forty-seven pages long. While it was impossible to examine in these studies the way in which all features of this complex piece of legislation were being implemented, the case studies did examine four areas that Congress in 1976 deemed particularly important. These parts of the legislation required that states and localities 1) develop

a planning capacity that would allow for adaptation of vocational programs to changing market needs, 2) evaluate programs to establish their effectiveness in training students for employment, 3) reduce sex bias and sex stereotyping, and 4) increase private sector involvement through the creation of a variety of advisory committees at state and local levels.

In general, the case studies found that Congressional efforts to regulate program direction in each of the four areas had but little effect. Even where Congressional mandates were stated clearly and sharply, it was difficult to ascertain significantly altered behavior at the school building level. The federal effort, of course, is conducted through each state; nonetheless, local administrators, the individuals who presumably will determine the implementation of federal regulations, were largely uninformed about the Vocational Education Amendments, suggesting that the business of vocational education was continuing largely unaltered. To be sure, this judgment may be premature. The full effects of Congressional legislation cannot be expected to be fully apparent four short years after the legislation was passed. As one administrator in Atlanta observed, "The laws were passed in '76; it took most of '77 to reach our level; '78 was spent figuring out what to do; and only in '79 and '80 has anything been done."[31] In Chicago, too, it was noticed that minimum compliance with even state information requirements did not occur until 1979. In all probability the legislation, if left unchanged in the next reauthorization, will have a more substantial effect on local practice in the second five years of its existence than in its first. Concluding that legislation has no immediate effects does not necessarily mean that it will not shape local thinking and practice in the longer run. About that our case studies can only be agnostic. The findings that follow must therefore be understood as only providing information about the short-term consequences of Congressional policy.

Planning

Any state that receives federal vocational education funding is required to produce a five-year plan that, among other things, must "set out explicitly the planned uses of Federal, State, and local vocational education funds for each fiscal year of the State plan and show how these uses will enable the State to achieve these goals."[32] States are also required to submit an annual program plan and an accountability report for each of the fiscal years included in the five-year plan. They rely on local educational agencies for provision of information necessary for completion of the report.

The state plans are often lengthy booklets, adorned with numerous tables and charts, many of which proclaim vigorous vocational education activity that successfully prepares students for entry into the labor market. Their utility in shaping policy, however, is highly suspect. Many local administrators conceded that they are little more than documents that formally comply with the planning requirements and that they do little to shape actual policy choice. One administrator acknowledged that statistics are "massaged" to assure federal examiners that progress is being achieved, while making the process of data accumulation and translation into planning documents as painless as possible for states and localities.

States do not appear overly aggressive in securing local compliance with federal objectives. In Chicago, for example, the state interprets federal guidelines in ways that are as lenient for local administrators as possible; when it prepared its own accountability report for 1978 to the federal government, it made no mention of specific instances of local malfeasance or non-compliance but instead justified any and all programs throughout the state as operating within federal expectations.[33] In San Francisco, the planning process is also concerned mainly with securing a smooth flow of

funds to localities with a minimum of federal scrutiny. As a 1977 analysis of state vocational education planning described it, required plans "have been largely oriented toward compliance with federal regulations rather than toward comprehensive planning."[34] In Atlanta, relations between state and local officials are less collaborative, but the difficulties seem to have little to do with local non-compliance with federal guidelines.[35] Overall, procedural compliance with federal planning provisions does take place in the cities studied, but it seems more geared toward satisfying federal guidelines than providing an opportunity for introducing purposive changes in local service delivery.

Evaluation

Federal legislation required that

> . . . each state shall evaluate, by using data collected, wherever possible, by statistically valid sampling techniques, each such program within the state which purports to impart entry level job skills according to the extent to which program completers and leavers: 1) find employment in occupations related to their training, and 2) are considered by their employers to be well-trained and prepared for employment.[36]

As is the case with the planning requirements, the evaluation activities are hardly in accord with the spirit of the law.

The demands and sophistication of the legal requirements notwithstanding, evaluation of vocational education programs in urban areas rely on traditional approaches and techniques that in the end leave school officials largely in control of the process and product of their own evaluation. It is true that local schools generally file an accountability report which records for each program the number of students by race, sex, handicap, and whether or not they are disadvantaged. External monitoring of local programs is also conducted. In Chicago, for example, a state-sponsored evaluation team visits each school once every five years to assess the strengths and weaknesses of

the school's vocational offerings.

If the evaluation team finds that a particular course or program is deficient, they may suggest changes or even recommend that the program be denied federal funding. If changes are recommended, local officials must respond to these suggestions in their next five year plan. While in theory these arrangements imply a good deal of central direction, in practice local administrators felt that it was up to them to determine whether or not they wished to modify practices in light of their evaluations.[37]

Local administrators are not only unlikely to dramatically alter programs based on external evaluations, but they also frequently scoff at the data included in many evaluation projects. Numerous building administrators noted that one of the major information-gathering methods is the post-graduation interview, in part to determine the effectiveness of vocational curriculum in preparing students for direct entry into the work force. They consistently contend that this method is highly unreliable because of the extreme difficulty in locating and obtaining the cooperation of former students. This problem is particularly pronounced in urban areas where many students leave their home areas upon completion of their secondary studies. Reliable data is reported to be most difficult to obtain from student constituencies in the least prestigious vocational schools. In Chicago, for example, the school which pioneered post-graduation evaluation ranks among the outstanding secondary institutions in the city; by contrast, schools of lesser quality have far less experience with evaluation, and understandably less motivation to produce detailed reports.[38] The Atlanta study revealed a similar difficulty in the accumulation of reliable data. In fact, the state in 1980 could not supply basic statistics for the 1978-79 school year.[39] While states such as California and Illinois proved more adroit at compiling

evaluation data, the utilization of this material for programmatic purposes was virtually non-existent.

Sex Stereotyping

The 1976 Amendments expect local institutions "to develop and carry out such programs of vocational education within each state so as to overcome sex discrimination and sex stereotyping" and they contain a number of specific provisions designed to achieve this objective.[40] Local response to these provisions was also quite limited. While local vocational administrators were not opposed to altering the sex composition of their programs, there was little evidence that they were doing much to facilitate the change.

The most common local response to the requirements appears to have been the creation of open enrollment for virtually all vocational programs to members of both sexes. It proved impossible to determine whethere these new developments were a direct consequence of federal guidelines or whether they represented more general societal changes. It was also difficult to find much evidence that opening course access significantly altered the sex composition of vocational programs historically skewed on the basis of sex, although each of the cities could demonstrate certain examples of breakthroughs.

Administrators consistently emphasized their support for addressing sex imbalances, and many were able to cite some enrollment changes in recent years. Some principals have attempted to recruit outside speakers and design programs to heighten awareness of curricular and vocational alternatives. In San Francisco, federal funds have been channelled toward specific projects designed to introduce women into vocational areas traditionally dominated by men; these experiments have occurred in the Community College District, which enjoys greater latitude in program experimentation.[41] Nonetheless, local officials report little progress and contend that change takes place very gradually.

Interviewers heard comments such as the following in explanation of the slow pace of change: "girls dislike loud, dirty work;" "boys realize that the income in traditional female occupations is relatively poor;" "boys do not have the fine motor skills that girls do;" schools "cannot counteract the influence of the home." Given these perceptions, many program directors and principals foresee little likelihood of dramatic breakthroughs in sex stereotyping.

Private Sector Involvement

Somewhat more tangible results of the Amendments can be discerned in the area of private sector involvement in local vocational education service delivery. The most recent federal vocational education legislation required that each funding recipient "establish a local advisory council to provide . . . advice on current job needs and on the relevancy of courses being offered."[42] The Amendments called for broad participation on these councils, including members of the general public and experts in specific vocational areas germane to local programs. Such councils have, to a large extent, been created, but their mere existence does not insure valuable contacts between training programs and the private sector.

The most prestigious vocational institutions have long relied upon advisory councils and enjoy extensive private sector support. This supportive base provides curricular advisement and equipment donations to schools, as well as internships and job placements for students. But such councils are less active in less prestigious institutions that are not so well-endowed. Predictably, advisory councils at the least able and equipped schools are largely perfunctory. Parents are sometimes amassed to lobby the school board and the central office, but meager substantive returns are gained from these efforts. Federal requirements may provide a general framework for such

participation, but their effect depends greatly upon local school conditions, and thus far has shown few signs of bolstering institutions who most readily need private sector support.

In Rochester, private sector support is largely oriented toward the new Edison Technical High School in Rochester. Other schools in the city offer vocational instruction, but Edison has emerged as the leading recipient of private sector attention and support. A local industrial management organization "has been a staunch supporter of the movement to create a new, more up-to-date and sophisticated" school and it has concentrated its energies on Edison.[43] In Chicago and San Francisco, the most prestigious vocational institutions had close ties to the private sector, but had cultivated these relations well in advance of federal council requirements.

Limited Impact of Federal Regulations: Some Explanations

The reasons for the limited impact of federal directives on local vocational education policy are multiple. In the first place, federal allocations for vocational education in urban areas are only a small percentage of total state and local expenditures. If federal vocational education policy were significantly affecting local practice, it would have to be the proverbial tail wagging the dog.

The way in which vocational education funds are distributed make such wagging highly unlikely. Under the 1976 Amendments, most funds are distributed among the states according to a pre-established formula that is based largely on the population size of each state in certain age categories. The states are responsible for allocating the funds among school districts, community colleges, and other vocational institutions. State guidelines are interpretations of federal regulations, and state enforcement depends on the eagerness of state officials to pursue national policy objectives. In practice, state

officials seem to identify more with the interests and concerns of local school officials than with national policy objectives. These practices maximize the autonomy of local administrators. At both state and federal levels, resource allocation does not vary according to the extent to which local officials are vigorously pursuing national objectives. As a result, vigorous enforcement of national policy objectives becomes more difficult.

Furthermore, vocational education funds are allocated among the states on a matching basis. For every federal dollar spent under the basic grants program, states and localities must allocate a similar amount. While this is designed to insure that local governments are genuinely committed to a federally funded program and reduce the fiscal burdens of the federal government, it also means that federal objectives must roughly coincide with state and local objectives. Where the two conflict, federal objectives cannot be pursued too assiduously without jeopardizing state and local willingness to participate. If policies with respect to evaluation and sex stereotyping in vocational education were too stringent, many localities might prefer to forego federal funds under the Act rather than allocate matching local resources for programs found distasteful.

Slippage in national policy objectives occurs not only as the state reformulates national concerns, but at various local steps as well. By focusing much of the research attention on vocational education at the school-building level, the case studies were able to identify perceptions and activities at the very level where services were being delivered. For federal policy to affect activities at this level, they have to be transmitted from Washington to the state capitol, from there to the school system's department of vocational education, from the vocational assistant superintendent to many other administrators, and, finally, to principals and teachers in individual schools.

The slippage in this process was substantial. Shared perceptions were rare among various levels of the so-called chain of command. At the school level there was scarcely any awareness of a Vocational Education Act at all. Many school-building personnel were simply unaware of the federal presence in vocational education. The impact of federal directives on local vocational programs, in turn, remains largely insubstantial, once filtered through these numerous levels.

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

The research reported here is limited by the extremely limited resources available to each investigator, and the small number of cities that were studied. As compared with the other projects funded by the Vocational Studies Team within the National Institute of Education, this research undertaking was extremely modest in scope. Therefore, any findings that we report and recommendations that are made need to be given particularly close scrutiny and checked against other sources of available information. Because of these limitations, we shall make more general recommendations rather than any set of detailed legislative proposals.

Contacts with the Marketplace

While Congressional capacity to direct vocational training is limited to the extent to which it does direct-local resource allocation, it should encourage further emphasis on building relations between vocational programs and the private sector. If vocational education is to continue to have an important role in a society where basic skills that can be applied to a wide variety of circumstances have come to be the most valuable, it needs to see its major role as assisting students in managing the transition from school to work. Because youth, as a group, seem to be facing significant problems of discrimination and negative stereotyping, it is all the more important for

young people, as individuals, to have their own specific market contacts. Training programs that place students directly in touch with employers, giving them an opportunity both to explore alternative work situations and to demonstrate their seriousness and competence, are likely to yield the greatest individual and societal benefits. Numerous creative initiatives have already been made in this area; federal efforts should take note of these and build upon them.

Eliminate Systems of Institutional Stratification

In a society and economy as open and changing as that of the United States, clearly definable levels of vocational education services are counter-productive both for the individuals participating within them and for the country as a whole. American schools have long been known for their comprehensive, integrative quality. Because they serve all the children in the community, they have traditionally represented American ideals of liberty and equality. Current efforts to desegregate the nation's schools are merely the latest chapter in a long history of attempts to bring educational practice into harmony with the country's finest ideals.

It is therefore unfortunate that Congress, as a matter of national policy, has in the area of vocational education encouraged the development and extension of a set of service delivery systems that institutionalize race and class differences. The distinctions between junior colleges, secondary schools, and CETA training programs have developed without conscious planning on the part of federal or local officials, but nonetheless they provide distinct populations with varying quality services. The most elaborate, well-supported, and occupationally useful programs seem to be increasingly concentrated within the junior and community colleges. The secondary institutions provide some high-quality programs through a limited number of specialized schools, but,

for the most part, their offerings are much more poorly staffed and equipped and much less well connected with the private sector. Finally, most of the manpower training programs funded under CETA have the fewest resources and the least prestige. Not surprisingly, it is the CETA programs which serve disproportionately high numbers of low-income minorities.

The problems produced by the co-existence of these three types of vocational offerings are exaggerated by the particular problems of youth in the labor market. Since youth generally have little proven job experience, the particular place that they received their training is especially significant for the kind of job they obtain and even whether they are offered any position at all. The best credential a new employee can have is the backing of a prestigious vocational training program. The weakest credential -- perhaps a credential of only negative market value -- is to have a diploma from a training program of little or no repute. It is questionable whether federal policies that maintain institutions of different status and rank can reduce the employment problems of low-income minority youth or increase the overall productivity of the American economy.

Bridging the Existing Gaps

Attempts by Congress to redirect local vocational education programs through its 1976 amendments generally have had little effect -- at least in the first years of the program. The processes of policy implementation are so complex that in the short run it is very difficult for Congress to achieve specific, detailed objectives. Instead of attempting to apply identical and complicated policies in each local program, Congress should confine itself to stating realizable objectives and arranging an institutional framework for achieving them. Congress cannot escape its obligations to uphold and enforce fundamental Constitutional requirements, but the present set of regulations

seem unlikely to achieve the desired objectives, particularly given the wide variance of local districts to respond to such provisions. The present types of regulations are likely to generate high administrative costs and cause local officials to substitute procedural compliance for commitment to policy goals. The case study findings suggest that this is occurring at present.

Alternative federal efforts might seek to bridge gaps between the various kinds of vocational programs. There are institutions that successfully manage the transition from school to work, even in urban areas fraught with problems of high unemployment. Ironically, not all of these programs presently function with capacity enrollments, and all could conceivably be expanded to absorb more students and programs beneath their sound institutional umbrellas. Federal dollars could be directed toward expanding the access of low-income and minority students to these programs, building bridges between the prestigious and less well-endowed programs and institutions instead of continuing to drive wedges between them.

Increasing Variety

At the same time, we do not advocate a full uniformity to all vocational education programs in the United States. On the contrary, one of the problems with many secondary schools today is their attempt to provide the whole range of educational services to all students living within the community. The greatest advance in secondary education in urban areas might well come from introducing greater curricular variety and specialization among schools. If schools are defined by the particular approaches and programs they offer, not by the neighborhood in which they are located, the identity and mission of the school is determined by its curriculum rather than by its particular youth culture. Moreover, students can be given a sense of autonomy and freedom that goes with the capacity to choose among a variety of high school

alternatives. If the junior and community college systems can be taken as a model for what is possible at the secondary level, perhaps some of the uncertainty and malaise that pervades the comprehensive high school can be reduced, if not eliminated altogether.

If vocational education is understood to be managing the transition from school to work, it becomes relevant for all students and it can play a key role in giving distinctive identities to the variety of schools located within a central city. Vocational education then need not be the inferior component of a comprehensive high school, but a key element in a curriculum which emphasizes both the need for developing basic, transferable skills and the desirability of obtaining meaningful contact with the marketplace.

These suggestions are more than can be accomplished by any minor modification of federal vocational education policy. They can only be achieved through prolonged discussions of the changing role of secondary education in the United States. Yet, the difficulties faced by American youth, by secondary schools, and by government-sponsored work programs are too great to require anything less.

FOOTNOTES

1. The four case studies include: Wayne J. Urban and Charles A. Starratt, "Vocational Education in the Atlanta Schools" (Georgia State University: National Institute of Education, 1981); Paul E. Peterson and Barry G. Rabe, "Career Training or Education for Life: Dilemmas in the Development of Chicago Vocational Education" (University of Chicago: National Institute of Education, 1981); Michael W. Kirst and Barry G. Rabe, "Vocational Education and Federal Policy in San Francisco" (Stanford University: National Institute of Education, 1981); William Lowe Boyd and Harold Cline, "Vocational Education in a Technical Labor Market: Rhetoric and Reality in Rochester, New York" (Pennsylvania State University: National Institute of Education, 1981).

   Portions of this manuscript depend heavily and explicitly on these four case studies. Although we have generally not burdened the text with quotation marks when drawing upon these studies, footnotes indicate the particular case study which is being directly or indirectly quoted. We thank the authors of the case studies for their permission to use their material in this way.

2. Noah Lewin-Epstein, "Youth Employment in High School," Report to the National Center for Education Statistics (Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, 1981).

3. National Opinion Research Center, "A Proposal for a Center for Research on Poverty," Submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1981.

4. We are indebted to Robert Michael, National Opinion Research Center, for his perceptive comments on these issues.

5. Mark S. Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 78, 1973, pp. 1360-1380.

6. This and subsequent information attributed to NORC was obtained from Lewin-Epstein, "Youth Employment in High School." Page numbers were not available.

7. Kirst and Rabe, pp. 51-2.

8. Ibid., p. 52.

9. Ibid., p. 53.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., p. 54.

12. Ibid., pp. 59-65.

13. Boyd and Cline, p. 45.

14. Peterson and Rabe, pp. 38-9.

15. Kirst and Rabe, p. 36.

16. Ibid., p. 37.

17. Ibid., p. 39.

18. Urban and Starratt, p. 68.

19. Kirst and Rabe, p. 36.

20. Urban and Starratt, p. 76.

21. Peterson and Rabe, p. 51.

22. Department of Labor, "Employment and Training Report of the President" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980).

23. Richard F. Elmore, "The Youth Employment Delivery System," Policy paper for the Vice President's Task Force on Youth Unemployment (Brandeis University: Center for Public Service, 1980), p. 6.

24. Boyd and Cline, p. 35.

25. Ibid., p. 37.

26. Peterson and Rabe, pp. 82-3.

27. Elmore, pp. 13, 14, 27.

28. Kirst and Rabe, p. 76.

29. The "Distribution of Federal, State, and Local Vocational Education Funds" study is headed by Charles Benson, University of California at Berkeley.

30. Peterson and Rabe, p. 67.

31. Urban and Starratt, p. 63.

32. Vocational Education Amendments of 1976, Public Law 94--482, 12 October 1976, 90 Stat. 2180.

33. Peterson and Rabe, p. 73.

34. Kirst and Rabe, p. 70.

35. Urban and Starratt.

36. Vocational Education Amendments of 1976, 90 Stat. 2187.

37. Peterson and Rabe, pp. 60-1.

38. Ibid., p. 34.

39. Urban and Starratt, p. 70.

40. Vocational Education Amendments of 1976, 90 Stat. 2169.

41. Kirst and Rabe, pp. 81-2.

42. Vocational Education Amendments of 1976, 90 Stat. 2176.

43. Boyd and Cline, p. 5.